DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY ZTCHR DATE 1/75
RDS or XDS EXT. DATE
TS AUTH. REASON(S)
ENDORSE EXISTING MARKINGS
DECLASSIFIED/RELEASABLE
RELEASE DENIED
FA or POI EXEMPTIONS
139 R

FROM: Department of Public Relations
PRINCETON UNIVERSITY
Princeton, New Jersey
(Telephone: Princeton 1-2300
Extensions 234, 564)

Release: After 1:00 P.M. Saturday, February 21, 1953

An address by Ambassador George F. Kennan at the 39th Annual Mid-Winter Meeting of Princeton University's National Alumni Association on Saturday, February 21, in Dillon Gymnasium, Princeton University:

"I think I need not dwell on the satisfaction it gives me to be able to be here today and to have the opportunity of sharing my thoughts with you on this occasion. This sort of participation in the affairs of Princeton looms as a special sort of privilege to anyone whose work kept him out of this country for many years after graduation and who was deprived of most of those early associations within the alumni body that meant so much to so many other people in the first years after college.

"I have discovered in the course of the years that when people ask me to speak, what they usually want me to talk about is Russia. That, in other circumstances, I should be glad to do; for the subject is an inexhaustible one. But this is a rather special time. It is hard to talk about Russia without talking about the policy issues that are under advisement just at this moment; and it seems to me that such subjects are better discussed by those public officials who now bear the responsibility for their study and treatment.

"Being back here in these familiar surroundings puts me in mind of the fact that in recent years I have worn two hats; one of them that of a government official and the other that of a scholar, and that it was precisely here in Princeton that the scholar's hat was worn. For this reason, I thought I would say a few words today about one of the places where scholarship and diplomacy meet, and that is: the teaching of international relations at the undergraduate level. I would like to emphasize that what I am about to say does not relate to graduate or other advanced study in this field.

"Certainly, no one can complain today of the volume of time and effort devoted in American colleges and universities to instruction about foreign affairs. I am sure that there is not a liberal arts curriculum in the country which does not include courses or activities in this field, and many of the technical institutions are now also beginning to include such courses.

"The reasons behind this expansion of international studies are plainly ones with which no one can quarrel. The development surely reflects, in the main, a realization of the importance of our participation in world affairs and of the extent to which understanding of world affairs has been recognized as a part of constructive citizenship in our country.

"There are people, I am sure, who would feel that the high volume of instruction in this field is in itself the guaranty of a fairly respectable measure of achievement. These people would argue that some international affairs instruction is obviously better than none at all, and that therefore this impressive volume of activity must be by and large productive of useful results, regardless of the content of the courses.

"About this I have my doubts. I am not at all sure that there is any virtue in teaching people about international affairs, aside from such virtue as may reside in the tenor of the teaching itself. Since the relevant factual material is infinite, embracing in the last analysis practically everything there is to know about the human family, this is a field in which the pursuit of knowledge without understanding is peculiarly pointless and useless. This being the case, mere volume of instruction does not guarantee anything at all in the way of results. If instruction does not proceed from a realistic understanding of the subject it can be worse than useless. I think anyone who has lectured extensively about foreign affairs will have had the same experience I have had --

DECLASSIFIED

of noting that the questions asked by simple and relatively uneducated people are often more sensible and penetrating than those asked by people who have had a good deal of teaching on these subjects, but have been taught the wrong way.

"Instruction in international affairs can be for two different purposes.

"The first is to instill into the student the type of understanding of the subject needed by the man who is not going to make participation in international affairs his business in life but who wants to acquit himself creditably of his duties of citizenship. A man who wants to be a good citizen needs to be able to judge men and issues in national life. But there are few important issues of national policy that can be understood today except in relation to our international position. And even the quality of statesmen often becomes manifest primarily in their reaction to problems that are at least partly problems of international life. The conscientious citizen therefore obviously requires as broad and as enlightened an understanding of this subject as he can get.

"The second purpose which instruction in international affairs can serve is of course to prepare men for service in the foreign field, either in Government or otherwise.

"With regard to the first of these subjects -- the imparting of the understanding of international affairs -- my central thesis is simply this: it is important to remember that international affairs is a subject, not a discipline, and by that I mean that it is a mistake to think of international affairs as anything outside the regular context of life -- as anything, that is, which a man could hope to understand without having to understand things much more basic.

"There is no such thing as foreign affairs in the abstract. The relations between states are part of the whole great problem of politics -- of the behavior of man as a political animal. They are inseparably connected with all of the other aspects of the fundamental human problem of power that lies at the heart of all politics: the problem of how the freedom of choice of the individual, or of the organized society, is to be limited in order to repress chaos and insure the good order necessary to the continuation of civilization.

"We Americans have a strange, and to me disturbing, attitude toward this subject of power. We don't like the word. We don't like the concept. We are suspicious of people who talk about it. We like to feel that the adjustment of conflicting interests is something that can be taken care of by juridical norms and institutional devices, voluntarily accepted and therefore not involving violence to the feelings or interests of anyone. We like to feel that this is the way our own life is arranged. We like to feel that if this principle were to be understood and observed by others as it is by us, this would put an end to many of these ghastly misunderstandings and conflicts that have marked our time.

"But we ignore the fact that this thing called power -- whether or not we like the name -- underlies our own society as it underlies every other order of human affairs distinguishable from chaos. Such things as order and civilization are not self-engendering. They do not flow just from themselves or even from any universal and enlightened understanding of political institutions in the abstract.

"In our country, the element of power is peculiarly diffused. It is not concentrated, as in other countries, in what we might call the 'pure form' of a national uniformed police establishment, functioning as the vehicle of a central political will. Power, with us, [illegible] that does of course exist to some extent in courts of law and in [illegible]shments. But it also exists in many other American institutions [illegible] in our economic system, though not nearly to the degree the Marxians claim. Sometimes, unfortunately, it exists in irregular forces -- in underworld groups, criminal gangs, or informal associations of a vigilante nature -- capable of terrorizing their fellow citizens in one degree or another. Above all, it exists in the delicate compulsions of our social life; in the force of community opinion within our country; in the respect we have for the good opinion of our neighbors. For

DECLASSIFIED

reasons highly complex, we Americans place upon ourselves quite extraordinary obligations of conformity to the group in utterance and behavior, and this sort of thing seems to be growing rather than declining as a feature of our national life. All these things can cause us to modify our behavior in many ways which are perhaps disagreeable to ourselves; and that is exactly what the word 'power' means. They bring us to put restraints upon ourselves which in other parts of the world would be required of people, and imposed upon them only, by the straightforward exercise of the central police authority.

"Now I am not taking exception to this curious diffusion, within American life, of the power to make men conform to given patterns of behavior. It has both advantages and dangers. It represents unquestionably a manner of protecting the interests of the individual against the more dangerous and humiliating forms of tyranny and oppression in normal times.

"But we must not permit this to blind us to the fact that such a thing as power does exist and must exist and is, in fact, not a regrettable departure from the norm of social decorum, but a necessity of civilization, flowing from certain facts about human nature, certain imperfections if you will, that are quite basic, that have been there since the beginning of time, and that are not going to be corrected by any man-made device, whether institutional or educational. It is these things I conceive the Church to have in mind when it speaks of 'original sin'. They are things that provide one of the main keys to the understanding of history, insofar as we are capable of understanding it at all. They lie at the heart of our problem of living together as human beings within the borders of this land. And they also lie at the heart -- and this is the burden of my song -- of our problem of living side by side with other human societies within the framework of this planet.

"Whoever would understand foreign affairs, therefore, cannot and will not do it by understanding merely the intricacies of tariffs or the various classifications of treaties or the ways in which the United Nations Charter differs from the Covenant of the League of Nations or the techniques of sampling mass opinion -- at least not by understanding these things alone. International affairs are primarily a matter of the behavior of governments. But the behavior of governments is in turn a matter of the behavior of individual man in the political context, and of the workings of all those basic impulses -- national feeling, charity, ambition, fear, jealousy, egotism, and group attachment -- which are the stuff of his behavior in the community of other men.

"Whoever does not understand these things will never understand what is taking place in the inter-relationships of nations. And he will not learn these things from any courses that purport to deal with international affairs alone. He will learn them only from those things which have been recognized for thousands of years as the essentials of humanistic study: from history itself, and from all those more subtle and revealing expressions of man's nature that go by the name of art and literature.

"I would say, therefore: let the international affairs course stand as an addendum to basic instruction in the humanities. Let it stand as an exercise in which the student is called to take those things that he has already learned about the characteristics of the human animal and to note in what curious and marvelous ways they find their ultimate expression in the behavior of governments. Let foreign relations be viewed as one area, an extremely important one, in which these laws of nature work themselves out. But let the teaching of the subject not be permitted to obscure its basic components. Let no one be permitted to think that he is learned in something called a 'science' of international relations unless he is learned in the essentials of the political process from the grass roots up and has been taught to look soberly and unsparingly, but also with charity and sympathy, at his fellow human beings. International affairs are not a science. And there is no understanding of international affairs that does not embrace understanding of the human individual.

"If these principles are observed -- and only, in my opinion, if they are observed -- will we be able to free ourselves from the enervating strain of

utopianism that has been present in the teaching of international affairs in our country in recent decades. By this I mean teaching that portrays incorrectly the nature of our world environment and our relation to it and encourages students to disregard the urgent real requirements of international life in favor of the cultivation of artificial and impractical visions of world betterment. As many of you know, this argument about the philosophy of our approach to our problems of foreign relations is one that has been agitating our academic communities quite intensely in recent months. I am myself, by public confession, a partisan in this dispute. This is not the time or place to pursue the argument. I would only say that further exposure to the bitter realities of the practice of international relations, in a place where these realities are about as bitter as they can conceivably be, has only strengthened my conviction that the shortcomings in the teaching of international affairs, and primarily the leanings toward shallow and utopian interpretations, represent, in their ultimate effect, a most important ceiling on our ability to handle ourselves effectively in world affairs. They find their reflection very markedly in the great commercial mass media, with all their enormous secondary educational responsibility; and through them, and through other channels as well, they place their stamp on the ability of men in government to understand the nature of their problems and to react to those problems intelligently. This is admittedly largely a question of general educational level, and not just of the philosophical tenor of courses on foreign affairs; but that is precisely my point. Until we can achieve a deeper and more realistic understanding generally among the influential strata of this country, as to what is really involved in the process of international relations, I fear we will not succeed in reducing appreciably the number of bewildering and painful surprises our people derive from the unfolding of international events, or the incidence of recrimination and bitterness on the domestic plane to which such surprises often give rise.

"So much for the teaching of the understanding of international affairs. Now a word about the teaching of the practice of it. There are a number of institutions in the country engaged, either entirely or partly, in this sort of teaching. I think they have done fine work, our own Woodrow Wilson School in particular. I think that they deserve every support. What I am about to say is not in criticism of them but rather by way of defense of them against the pressures to which I know they must from time to time be subjected.

"The participation of individual Americans in international activity takes a great variety of forms. That is true even within the framework of government work alone. This variety is so great that no institution could hope to give what could be called complete vocational training, in the strict sense of the word, for work in the international field. A man who enters the Foreign Service of the United States or goes abroad in the employ of any great American concern, commercial or philanthropic, is apt to find himself dealing with the most amazing diversity of problems. This lies in the nature of international life itself, and of necessity -- whatever the man's function -- of reconciling conflicting national outlooks and customs.

"As far as I can see, the only qualities that bind together the ability of people to measure up to these various sorts of functions are the general qualities of understanding, adaptability, tact, and common sense. Certainly that is true of the Foreign Service of the United States.

"But it has been borne in upon me with great force on many occasions in the course of a Foreign Service career that these qualities I have been talking about are more ones of character than of intellect. Both things are involved here, of course; and I am not sure that there is any full and valid distinction between them. The man of real character is usually not lacking in a certain sort of wisdom; and the really wise man is never without character; for understanding in the deepest sense involves knowledge of self; and knowledge of one's self requires an effort of the will as well as of the intellect and involves something of that struggle with conscience which is the very essence of man's moral growth. But I do not wish to get lost in terminology. Let me put it this way. In order that a man may be useful in the tasks of service in the international field, he requires dignity both of the intellect and of character. The two are linked together in curious ways, and what I am talking about here may be a matter of

DECLASSIFIED

emphasis. But as between the two, it is character which in my opinion is unquestionably the more important and upon which the emphasis of the training should lie.

"As one who has been in charge of Foreign Service establishments at one time or another, I can say without hesitation that I would like my subordinates to be well-disciplined both in mind and in character; but if I had to choose, I would take any day the man on whose character I could depend, even though I had to nurse him along in his thinking, rather than the man whose mind might have been trained but whose character was unformed or undependable. The qualities of honor, loyalty, generosity, consideration for others, and sense of obligation to others, have been the guts of usefulness and effectiveness in the Foreign Service, as I have known it. They may be that in other walks of life, too, for all I know; but I am speaking here only of work in the foreign field, which I know.

"This was true even in the more distant days, when government was easier to be a part of, when the relationship of the individual officer to his superiors rested on rather old-fashioned assumptions that made things rather simple and uncomplicated for both parties and permitted the officer to concentrate his attention almost entirely on the external aspects of his work. But how much truer it is today, when so much more is asked of the individual and so little help is given him. In our present controversial age, when the growing awareness of the responsibilities of citizenship and the sudden impact of the hideous problem of human disloyalty are whipping our established institutions about like trees in a storm, the position of the professional civil servant can become the center of some of the most severe strains and tensions our society knows. In this day of bigness and impersonality, of security clearances and loyalty investigations, of swollen staffs and managerial specialists -- in this day, in short, of the fading vitality of the individual relationship in government -- it requires a special manliness and fortitude for the civil servant to stride confidently along the path of his duties, to retain his serenity of mind and confidence in the future, to find the deeper roots of understanding of his own country and the deeper sources of faith in the utility of what he is doing.

"In all these things, my friends, the official will now be much helped by memorized facts or by acquired techniques. He will not be much helped by erudition, as distinct from understanding. He will be helped primarily by those qualities of courage and resolution that make it possible for men to have that quality we call independence of character, to face the loneliness and opprobrium this sometimes involves, and to stand up like men for their friends and their beliefs and their sense of duty to the national tradition.

"Now it is my impression, from the recollection of my days as an undergraduate, as well as from the associations I have had with the University in recent years, that the things I have been talking about here -- namely, understanding based on a firm grasp of the humanities, and character based on an uncompromising integrity in all personal associations -- are the very essence of a Princeton education and represent goals to which this University has clung in the face of very considerable pressures of the time which tended to divert it in other directions. My plea, therefore, is not that this University depart one jot from its established principles when it approaches the problem of teaching international affairs. It is rather that it not permit itself to be persuaded by anybody that there is anything in this subject of international relations that makes redundant any part of the traditional Princeton training or calls for anything in particular beyond what this Princeton training aims to achieve, and does when it is at its best.

"If men on this campus want to prepare themselves for work in the international field, then, I would say: Let them read their Bible and their Shakespeare, their Plutarch and their Gibbon, perhaps even their Latin and their Greek, and let them guard as the most precious of their possessions that concept of personal conduct which has grown up in this institution around the honor system, but of which the honor system is only a part and a symbol. Let them guard that code of behavior which means that men learn to act toward each other with honor and truthfulness and loyalty, to bestow confidence where confidence is asked, and to build within themselves those qualities of self-discipline and

self-restraint on which alone -- as it seems to me -- the integrity of a public service must be founded, if it is to rest secure.

"If these things are clung to and cultivated, then Princeton will be doing what is most important to prepare her sons to confront the problems of international life, whether as citizens or as public servants. Whatever else can be taught them about the immediate contemporary facts of international life will be a useful superstructure -- but only that."

* * * *